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HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF
SOUTHOLD TOWN,

READ JULY 4th, 1876,

AT THE CELEBRATION HELD IN GREENPORT, L. I.,

BY THE AUTHOR,

ALBERTSON CASE, Esq.,

TOWN CLERK.

CAREFULLY REVISED AND CORRECTED.

GREENPORT :

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TO THE PUBLIC.

The following sketch was written in great haste for the purpose of reading before an out-door assembly. In preparing it my chief aim was to catch the ear of my audience by the recital of a few details which would be most likely to secure attention because of their personal and local nature. As a consequence, it makes no pretensions to the dignity and requirements of a complete history. This explanation seems proper now that the sketch is to be published, and exposed to that severer criticism which printed words always receive. It claims no merit beyond a careful attempt at accuracy of statement.

It is but justice to add that I am indebted for a large part of the facts which I have related to my father, J. WICKHAM CASE, whose acquaintance with the history of the Town is far superior to mine.

ALBERTSON CASE.

Southold, July 7th, 1876.

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Fellow Townsmen: In this interval of rest from the active diversions and recreations of the day it has been appointed that I should tell you something of the story of this, our Town of Southold.

Its first settlement was in the year 1640, but it is necessary that we should go a little back of that date, in order to learn the cause of the settlement and the character of the men who made it.

All the leading nations of Western Europe, in the century succeeding the discovery of America, sent out numerous exploring parties to search out the mysteries of the New World and secure a foothold on its shores. Colonies were formed and settlements attempted. England had a brave and hardy race of seamen, and captains and admirals burning with a chivalrous thirst for deeds of exploit. In the latter half of the 16th century the great Elizabeth sat on the English throne, and her proud ambition fostered and animated the colonizing enterprises of her navigators. After her came the 17th century and the Stuarts. The first half of that century was a notable era in English history.

It began in aggressive assaults by James upon the civil, social and religious rights of his subjects. It ended in civil war, the beheading of Charles, and the protectorate of Cromwell. The Stuarts were egotistical theorists, despotic and obstinate, and broke their promises of justice to the people more easily than they gave them. On the other hand, the people were deeply stirred by religious matters. There was great controversy going on in respect to doctrine, and they were imbued with the strongest religious convictions. There were numerous sects and orders outside of the Established Church. The Stuarts made bitter war upon all shades of Nonconformists. The exercise of religious freedom became difficult and dangerous. Persecution was followed by resistance, and the

Puritan found in his King an enemy rather than a protector. Hence many, tired of the turmoil and troubles at home, sought in New England a shelter where they might obey the dictates of their own consciences. There they settled and organized colonies conformed to their religious, social and civil ideas.

Southold was settled in September or October, 1640, by a number of Puritans of the New Haven colony, who came from New Haven with their families. It was in effect the founding of a church community. The Rev. John Youngs, their pastor, properly appears to have been its leader. He was certainly one of the first settlers. Just who the others were no one now living can positively say. Probably Barnabas Horton, Thomas Mapes, Peter Hallock and [perhaps] Lieutenant John Budd were of the number. Richard Jackson had a dwelling-house in 1640, whose exact location cannot be fixed, but it is thought to have stood west of Greenport, somewhere on the farm now owned by the heirs of William Y. Brown, deceased. So we are sure that *he* was a first settler. Mr. Griffin in his Journal, which is so well known as a pleasant compendium of local history and old time gossip, gives us a list of thirteen whom he says were the first settlers. Without any derogation of the honesty of the venerable and amiable author, we are forced to pronounce his account an incorrect tradition. Several of the parties whose names he gives were living in other places at that time, and did not come to Southold till several years subsequent.

Pastor Youngs and his party located the present town street and built their dwellings upon it. The line of the main street probably ran about as it does now. Also the street to the head of the creek; the road to the North Sea, as it was then called, which now goes by the Railroad Depot, and the present Horton's Lane. Their dwellings in a few years lined the main street from the bridge at the run on the West, to the head of the harbor lane on the East. Constant accessions and additions of new settlers were occurring in the years immediately following the first settlement. Of those first years the town has no official record. There was a book of records covering that

time as appears from the records still in existence, but no one knows aught of it now.

Liber A of our Town Records begins with the date 1661, and quite naturally the record of each man's home, lot and out lands is the first subject embraced in the book. These home lots were allotted among the settlers, and most of them are described as containing four acres, more or less. Some of the later allotments were subject to the condition that the grantee should build upon them within three years.

This is the way the record begins: "Anno Domini, 1651. Breefe records of all the inhabitants accommodations herein, as followeth Vidlt., Impris. The Reverend Mr. John Youngs, Pastor of the Church of Christ in Southold, aforesaid, his home lot, with the meadow thereunto adjoyninge, conteyning by estimation seaven acres, more or less, bounded," &c. This lot fronted on the main street—where Joseph H. Goldsmith, Esq., now lives. The next entry is that of William Wells, "the Lawyer." His was a lot of four acres—where the hotel stands to-day. In like manner the lots of the other settlers are given; the entries continuing down until after 1660. The present location of nearly all of them is now known. Col. John Youngs' was located where Richard L. Peters lives; Barnabas Horton had two lots on the opposite corners of Horton's Lane; John Budd's was where Jonathan W. Hunting lives; Israel Peck's place was John Booth's home lot; Barnabas H. Booth lives on John Tucker's lot; the home lot of Thomas Mapes is now that of Gilder S. Conklin; Richard Benjamin lived at about the head of the present street to Jockey Creek; Joseph Horton's lot was near the house now owned by Captain Benjamin Cole; Philemon Dickerson's was the present residence of Hiram Terry; Mathias Corwin's was near the now residence of David Jennings; the lot of Barnabas Wynes, sen., now belongs (in part at least) to Charles A. Case; Thomas Terry's "whom lot lying next to the bridge at the West end of the Towne" is now Patrick May's; Thomas Moore's lot was where William Y. Fithian lives; John Conkling, sen., had his lot opposite the present Methodist Church; Captain John Underhill had the lot next

West on the hill which the Southold Savings Bank owns; Henry Case's lot was near the present residence of Mrs. Beulah Goldsmith, and Charles Glover's lot was off the street and at the creek, upon land now owned by ——— Stevenson.

It seems to have been a fixed design that the settlers should dwell in close proximity. Probably this was for their better defense, and to enjoy greater neighborliness in their new situation. While they gained these results, it was at the expense of time and convenience in getting to their farm lands. Still, it was a custom among Long Island settlers, as witness South and East Hamptons.

By 1660 there were at least fifty home lots with their dwellings in the settlement. Of those first erected probably not one now stands. We are led to imagine them as rude structures. Indeed the limited resources of their builders must have compelled them to live in plain houses. A vote, passed in 1652 at Town Meeting, gives us a broad hint that their roofs were of thatch, for it was then ordered that every inhabitant provide himself with a ladder sufficient to reach the top of his house.

The main street ran through the woods. January 5, 1657, it was ordered that every inhabitant should take up and carry away all trees and roots of trees standing in front of his home lot before the last day of March of that year, under forfeiture of 12*d.* for every stump left standing.

Measures of a sanitary nature were also adopted. Creatures dying "which were carrion," as the record has it, were directed to be buried by their owners within one day after notice given.

Every man finding cattle trespassing was empowered to impound them. Twenty shillings was ordered to be paid to the Indians by the Town Treasurer for every old wolf killed, and ten shillings for every young one.

The town was a law unto itself. Every voter at Town Meeting was a legislator. The government of the Town was the most simple form of Democracy; and, as if it were made necessary by absenteeism, provision was made that every voter should attend the Town Meetings, and for a failure to comply therewith a fine was fixed. Possibly this is a fresh proof that

there is "nothing new under the sun," and that the present popular cry that the best men keep out of public affairs was as true two hundred years ago as to-day.

When our ancestors entered into possession of these lands it was with the purpose of tilling the soil. They found mostly woodlands and salt meadows. It is curious to note how they portioned off the lands among themselves. Here and there was an arable field; this they would divide into small parcels of one and two acres, so that it might afford a share for each. Such, for instance, was the "old Field" of about 60 or 70 acres, lying on the bay, a mile or so to the East of the settlement. As its soil is even yet full of clam and oyster shells, it was probably the site of an Indian village, and had been kept cleared of woods by the Indians, and planted by them. This "old field" was surrounded by the settlers by a general fence, a certain portion of which each owner in the field was compelled to make, according to the size of his lot therein.

So, too, they made great account of the salt meadows. Almost every settler had from one to four acres in the different meadows at Oysterponds, Southold, Hog Neck, Cutchogue, and even as far as Aquebogue and the South side of the river, at the head of Peconic Bay. The high value they placed on their meadows was owing to the fact that they had little or no upland grass, and salt hay furnished the most available winter fodder for their stock.

Most of the lands became vested in individuals, either by direct special grant from the Town, or by virtue of the dividends which were made from time to time. By the latter method the greater portion of the land was disposed of. The divisions first began near home, as land about the settlement was in greatest request on account of its convenience to their dwellings. So the Calves Neck and the lots at the North Sea and those in the rear of the home lots were first divided. Then, as the land near at hand becomes occupied and more is sought, there are dividends of the Cutchogue lands, of the Oysterponds lands, and of those at Mattituck and Aquebogue. These dividends seem to have proceeded somewhat as follows: A certain

large tract would be concluded upon as the subject of division and then cut up into lots. There were several of these dividends in different localities in the town—three at Aquebogue, and probably two or three at least in the Oysterponds. It appears that the lots were of equal size but unequally divided in number among the settlers. Some had three or four lots in the dividends, others only one. This was determined by a rule based on the proportion which each had contributed towards defraying the general expenses of the settlement. Barnabas Horton, who came here with a fuller purse than most of the other settlers, had a larger number of lots in most of the dividends than the majority.

Thomas Mapes seems to have done most of the surveying of these lots, although John Tuthill is sometimes mentioned in that connection. We know not how they measured, or what rude instruments they had to work with, yet the boundary lines they run, often stretching long distances through the woods, and which in some instances have been preserved as boundary lines to this day, are notably straight. Taking into view the large area of the lands they divided, and the smallness of the parcels which were in many cases allotted, we conclude that Mr. Thomas Mapes must have been overrun with surveying business during the 'greater part of his life here. The maps and surveys he made, and which are alluded to in the records, are lost.

The Indian names of localities were adopted to a great extent, and are still perpetuated by daily use. Mattituck, Peconic, Cutchogue and Arshamomogue are familiar illustrations. Many, however, are obsolete. Yennacock, the general name of the town, is almost forgotten. How few know where Pequashneck and the Pisapunk Meadows lay, although they are frequently mentioned in the records. Yet our fathers in their local nomenclature often resorted to their own English tongue. Our Mill Creek they called Tom's Creek. Long Island Sound was known by the name of the North Sea.

Poole's Neck is now the farm of Henry L. Fleet at Cutchogue; Robin's Island Neck is the site of New Suffolk; Pea-

ken's Neck is now Great Island in Mill Creek, and was named from John Peaken, one of its first owners; the Hog Ponds, or Hogsty Neck, and Eagle Neck were at the Oysterponds; Fort Neck was at Cutchogue, and is now the farm of John Downs. It took its name from an old fort standing thereon. Sterling Harbor, sometimes called Winter Harbor, retained the first of those names down to a time within the memory of men yet living. Many of these local names have never been dropped. Calves Neck, Goose Creek, Robin's Island, Pine and Hog Necks, Plum Gut, Peter's Neck, Long Beach and South Harbor are well known names at this day.

One word the settlers used which is not found in Webster, and yet we think it is still sometimes heard among our farmers. It is the term, a spang of meadow, and means a neck or small piece of meadow jutting out into a creek.

Their spelling of proper names was uncertain and changeable. One Abraham Whitier was among the early settlers, yet his surname is spelled in so many different ways one can hardly count the variations. Sometimes the name of Budd is spelled with one d; Youngs is sometimes Yongs, and Benjamin Youngs, for many years Recorder of the Town, almost habitually signed his name "Benj Yo," as if the duties of his office had made writing a wearisome task. The Corwin's came from Mathias, their first ancestor here, whose name used to be written Curwin. The Wines's wrote their name with a y instead of an i. So did the Skidmores, but the Ryders reversed the rule. Quite a number of the settlers lacked the ability to write their names.

We judge that tobacco must have been numbered among their crops. The Tobacco Houses at Oyster Ponds are several times mentioned, and they stood in that beautiful and fertile plain through which Orchard Street now runs, and the fields thereabouts were called the Tobacco Grounds.

Early in their history mills were erected. There was one at Mill Creek, which stood somewhere between the present Railroad and highway bridges. Soon also there was a windmill on

the hill at the West end of the Town, and another at Town Harbor.

The title of many thousand dollars worth of valuable real estate in Greenport, lying East of Main Street, probably runs back to the grant to John Youngs, mentioned and recorded as follows: "One parcel of woodland, lying on the West side of Starling Harbor, at the poynt thereof, being about thirtie or fortie acres given him by the General Court at New Haven, in May, one thousand, six hundred fortie nine, and sythence converted to a farm."

About where is now the East line of the farm late of Jeremiah King, deceased, stood the General Fence, so called, running from the Sound to the head of Sterling Creek. The Oysterponds upper and lower neck were used by the people to pasture their cattle and hogs, in the same way that Montauk is still pastured; each proprietor putting in so many animals as his proportion of lands East of the fence entitled him to. Perhaps I should say here that what is now East Marion constituted the Upper Oysterpond Neck, and what is East of the mill pond was the Lower Neck.

With all their plainness of life the settlers were not proof against vanity of titles, and military rank carried much importance and honor with it. John Booth was an ensign, and his name goes in the records as Ensign Booth. John Budd was known as Lieutenant Budd, from the office he held in the Town force. Quite as often, too, he took the title of captain, from his having commanded a vessel. The notorious Captain John Underhill had a home lot here. His title was not obtained by sinecure service. He had served in Holland, and perhaps in Spain. He came over with Governor Winthrop, of Massachusetts, as a military officer; was captain of a company at Boston; was sent to arrest Roger Williams, but failed therein; was captain of a company on Block Island; engaged in the Pequot war; fought with the Dutch and English against the Indians; was at the capture of New York in 1664. Fighting was his trade, and his services were in constant requisition here and there throughout the colonies. His public reputation is

wider by far than that of any of the other settlers. John Youngs was a colonel of militia in 1693; his force numbering 9 companies, 533 men; Charles Glover and John Tucker were military captains.

The title Goodman often occurs. Thus we have Goodman Hallock, Horton and Purrier. The distinction indicated venerable age and the particular esteem and respect of neighbors.

In many of the deeds the occupation of the parties is given. Most are given as yeomen, planters, or husbandmen. Quite a number were mariners, of whom were: Thomas Weatherly, Matthew Sinderland, Thomas Moore, John Herbert, Ralph Goldsmith, Symon Moore.

Many of the common trades were practised here at the first. Jeremiah Vail, Thomas Tusten and William Salmon were blacksmiths; Richard Jackson and Joshua Horton carpenters; Abraham Whitier, Samuel Glover and Richard Clark were shipwrights; John Corey and Jacob Corey were weavers; James Haines and Samuel King coopers; John Franklin a cordwainer, and Lott Johnson a glover.

Vessels were owned here along at the very first, and the sea then as now contributed to the material welfare of the Town. Voyages were made to the West Indies. Town Creek was deeper than now, and near its head was a wharf. Among the hodge podge pertaining to all sorts of private business put upon record is a Bill of Lading. Our interest lies so much to-day in maritime matters that I copy this old writing, as a matter of curious comparison with those forms in use to-day. It reads: "Shipped by the grace of God in good order and well conditioned by Mr. Jonas Wood of Southold, in and upon the good ship called the Mary and Margaret of Southold, in New England, whereof is master under God for this present voyage Mr. Joseph Youngs, now riding at anchor in Southold Bay and by God's grace bound for the Barbadoes, to say Ten barrells of beef being marked as in the margin, 7 barrells marked f. o., three burnt marks upon the head, three barrells marked f. 4, two burnt marks upon the head, all other marks not regarded, and are to be delivered in the like good order and well conditioned at the

aforesaid port of Barbadoes, the danger of the seas only excepted unto Captain Timothy Crouther or to his assigns, he or they paying freight for the said goods after four pounds the tun with primage and average accustomed. In witness whereof the master or purser of the said ship hath affirmed to her bills of lading, all of this tenour and date the one of wch her bills being accomplished the other to stand void. And that God shall send the good ship to her destined port in safety. Amen. Dated in Southold the 24 November, 1656, outwardly all conditioned inwardly I know not, the hopes are in last."

Isaac Arnold had his warehouse at the head of the creek, and was the only merchant here. His vessels traded to the West Indies. Our exports then were staves, beeves, hides and tallow; our imports molasses and sugar. The ships, as they then called them, were one masted vessels of from thirty to forty tons burden. Such was the Thomas and John—a ketch or bill of sale to Mr. Arnold of 1-8 part of which vessel is recorded.

The Indians were kindly treated by the settlers, and reciprocated the kindness shown them. They sold their lands and were paid for them. As a rule they never caused any serious disturbances, were peaceful in their demeanor, and beyond poaching and petty thefts, and gave little trouble. Occasionally they killed a beef, and their dogs were of prowling, predatory habits. So it was ordered lawful for any inhabitant finding any Indian with any gun or bows and arrows or dogs anywhere between Arshamomogue and Plum Gut to detain and bring him before the proper authorities. This proceeded from the fear of loss among their cattle and swine then pasturing.

The ecclesiastical history of the Town merits more than the passing notice we are forced to content ourselves with. A house of worship was erected at the start, and stood a few rods West of the present Presbyterian Church. It remained there till 1684 when it was converted into a jail. The parish bounds ran for more than half a century from Plum Gut West to the Wading River. The minister's salary was a town charge, and their receipts to the constables are of record.

The old first bounds of Southold were from Mill Creek to the

Fresh Meadows at Cutchogue, where Thomas Golden now lives. Soon, under titles from the Indians, the bounds were extended.

The Town Patent from Andrews, which will be two hundred years old October 31st, next, described the territory of the personal and property rights were better protected in Southold in the early settlement than in any other spot in the world. They were men of excellently sound minds, and however else we may judge them, we must concede that they had sterling good sense and wise judgment.

Time commands us to advance our story now with more rapid step. Leaving the early settlement days let us halt, first to see how Southold bears the weight of a hundred years of age. We find in 1740 that many wild lands have been reclaimed, and well cultivated farms occupy a large part of her surface. Her population has increased several fold; villages, hamlets and homes are thickly scattered from the Wading River to Plum Gut.

New names have come in; some of them are of leading townsmen. Samuel Landon is the Supervisor, and for two generations after him the family name was potent in our Town affairs. Year after year Elijah Hutchinson sits as Moderator in Town Meeting, and his large landed estates number hundreds of acres. Then Joshua Wells and James Fanning respectively are chief officers of the Town for several years. In 1767 Major Parker Wickham, rich in lands and high in the Town councils, began his long administration. During the middle of the last century there is little of special interest in our Town history. Votes are taken concerning the care of the poor, the keeping up of the highways, the regulation of cattle, and the internal affairs of the Town ran on with a quiet monotony.

Territorially we were far removed from the French and Indian wars. We were, however, represented in them. Captain Joseph Conklin, of Arshamomogue, had command of a company at Fort Edward in 1756, where he had Southold men with him. Peter Paine, Joel Reeve and Thomas Osborn, of Southold, died there in the summer of that year, and others from the Hampton towns.

to go
after
time

When we come to the Revolutionary War we find the Town deeply interested in the struggle between the colonies and the mother country. Our business relations with the New England Town substantially thus: West by the Wading River; North by the Sound; East by and including Plum Island; South by the bay going westerly as far as Red Creek, then on a straight line from the head of said creek to the brook at Wading River, near where the mill stands at present. The Town of Riverhead was formed therefrom in 1792. Shelter Island seems also to have submitted itself to our Town authority until 1730.

In 1648 the Town became a recognized member in the courts of the New Haven Colony. In 1662 that colony united with Connecticut Colony. In 1664 we came under the authority of New York. 1673, the Dutch took New York, but Southold resisted the change and acknowledged allegiance to Connecticut once more; 1674, the English again possessed New York, and Southold reluctantly came under that colony the second time.

All these changes of their chief government were of serious importance to their affairs in the minds of the settlers, and for a number of years they made vigorous endeavors to establish a permanent connection with the Connecticut Colony, whose principles, laws and people were more in accord with their views than those of New York. But we have not time to dwell on these various changes of colonial jurisdiction, although they are of the highest historical moment.

We close this hurried glance at the early days of the settlement with a few words of general description of the settlers. Of course they had all the frailties of the natural man. We know that there were private contentions among them; that they were wilful and ultra and arbitrary in matters of conscience. With these faults we can count up a long list of virtue. They were moral in their lives, sternly religious in their belief and practice, assiduously industrious in their labors, prudent in all things, and of unselfish devotion to the needs of their settlement. If their religion was austere yet its fundamental principles have made and preserved the nation; if their laws and local regulations were sometimes trivial and illiberal yet the great bulk of the rules they made for their government

aimed at and accomplished justice. For their day and generation they ruled their affairs wonderfully well. We believe that colonies were intimate and harmonious. Their grievances were ours, and Southold gave its hearty sympathy to the cause of Independence. Like the New Englanders our fathers were of Puritan stock, and loyal to the King while he ruled them justly. On the other hand, they were earnest in their hatred of oppression, and stubborn in their devotion to their rights. Southold Town was as devoted to the cause of American Independence as Massachusetts Colony. There were few Tories in the Town, and they were such rather from conservatism, or from a lack of faith in the successful establishment of a new and independent nation than because they thought "the King could do no wrong."

A company of minute men was formed in 1775, and on the 27th of November of that year Lieutenant Moses Case took his commission as Captain. He, like many others of his neighbors, wrote with chalk, in large letters, on his hat the words, "Liberty or Death."

In '76 Southold had two companies of minute men—Paul Reeve and Jonathan Bagley captains. They belonged to Colonel Josiah Smith's Suffolk County Regiment, which was at Brooklyn August 29th, '76. This was the date of Washington's retreat from Long Island, but we think that the regiment had not been engaged in the battle. The regiment then disbanded; Colonel Smith giving leave for every man to shift for himself in getting their families and effects off safe. In September Southold met to take the oath of British allegiance, by order of Colonel Phineas Fanning. Through the war many sought refuge from the British at Lyme, Branford, Saybrook, New London, and other Connecticut towns. There many of the refugees became destitute and unable to support their families, and they were constantly sending petitions to the British at New York for permission to return.

The position of the Town during the war was one of peculiar embarrassment. The British had possession of the Island, and our people were subjected to frequent insults, indignities and

losses of property. In these ways they oftentimes suffered at the hands of the English soldiers. Again, their long water front made them the prey of predatory parties who robbed them of their stock and crops and found an easy and safe flight in boats.

Ezra L'Hommedieu, who lived at Town Harbor, sat first in the Provincial Congress of New York ; afterwards in the Continental Congress from 1779 to 1783. He was a decided and active patriot. Mr. L'Hommedieu bore a more prominent part in the councils of the nation than any other man that has ever lived among us.

During the last hundred years great changes have taken place in the Town. Social customs and all the conveniences of life, civil and religious institutions, agriculture and the trades, the means of travel and communication, vessels, houses, lands have all been subject to such radical changes that we can hardly imagine them as they were in 1776. This beautiful village, teeming with an active, busy people, with its thrifty industries, its varied businesses, its extensive maritime interests, is the product of the last 50 years. It would be a pleasant task to rehearse these various changes, but time forbids, and my story is ended.

I have given it to you without the least pretension to a full or adequate treatment of the subject. Mine is only a little fragment of a long and copious history, whose salient features are worthy subjects of our gratitude and pride. Truly we have a right to be proud of our ancestors ; of those honest, brave hearted, clear headed men who came here and occupied this pleasant arm of land—this jewel, which nature has made so lovely in its setting, so precious in its valuable qualities of soil and climate. In 1640 it was a wilderness—to-day it is almost a garden spot. Southold settlement was poor and feeble in its infancy ; Southold Town in its old age is rich and vigorous. Her sons rejoice and are happy in her strength and beauty, her fair and honest name. Thanks forever and ever to our fathers who came here, lived out their industrious, honest lives, and dying transmitted to us, their children, so fair a heritage for our home.

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